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The Riches of divine Grace illustriously displayed.

A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the Decease of
THOMAS PORTER,
(In the 63d Year of his Age,)
Late of HATFIELD-BROAD-OAK, in ESSEX.

Preached at
LIME-STREET,
October 29, 1752.

By **JOHN RICHARDSON.**

The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.
Isa. xxxv. 8.

Indocti surgunt & rapiunt cælum. Anon.

Laudatur ab his, culpatur ab illis. Hor.

The SECOND EDITION.

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SERMON

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(In the 63d Year of his Age)

Late of HATFIELD, in Essex.



LIME-STREET,

October 29, 1752.

By JOHN RICHARDSON.

The way leading unto, though a fool, shall be an increase
of knowledge.

Indolence is the enemy of industry.

Industry is the enemy of idleness.

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The PREFACE [iii]
leave this defective performance in his
hand, and submit it to the perusal of
the candid Reader, who may be willing
to receive benefit from the unworthiest

of God's servants. E H T

P R E F A C E.

SO different are the sentiments of men, both as to persons and things, that it is hardly possible to suppose some should not be dissatisfied with almost any performance, however unbiassed the author's design may be. The reasons of my venturing to publish this plain sermon, are, because I was desired to do it, on account of the extraordinariness of the person it relates to ; and likewise, because I have since been informed, it was rendered useful, by the divine blessing, to several that heard it preached : I therefore humbly
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EPH. ii. 8. first clause of the verse.

By grace ye are saved.

WHEN we survey this stately fabric of the universe, when we contemplate those glories that roll over our heads, and all around us, when we consider what immense spaces those heavenly bodies revolve in, and how punctually they obey the divine Fiat, established at their first creation; struck with pleasing wonder and astonishment, who can forbear crying out with the royal Psalmist, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" But he has, as the same inspired writer observes, magnified his word above all his name, or beyond every other method of making himself known. Psalm cxxxviii. 2. The glories of redeeming love, the transactions of a God incarnate, the amiable and enchanting splendors of the christian scheme, far outshine all the wonders display'd in heaven, earth, and seas.

In discoursing on that excellent and important passage, which was given me by the deceased for a text, and which I have heard him frequently,

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ly,

ly, and with great delight repeat, I shall humbly attempt these two things, with their improvement.

I. Shew what is implied in that salvation, here referred to by our apostle.

II. How the unmerited mercy and grace of God shine and are displayed in this salvation.

I. What is implied in that salvation here referred to by the apostle. Among numberless grand ideas that go into the nature of it, I shall only select and mention these that follow.

1. Remission of sins. To give knowledge of salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins. Luke i. 77.

2. The purifying our affections and conversation by the influences of God's Holy Spirit ; or, the healing our natures, and restoring our faculties, to their primitive rectitude.

3. Deliverance from the malignant tendency of afflictions, and on the contrary, making them co-operate for our advantage, and disarming death itself of its sting, that last enemy.

4. and lastly, Our being advanced to all the lovely realities, and immense felicities of a brighter and better world, and that both in soul and body.

1. The forgiveness of all our sins, is an invaluable branch of that salvation we are called
to

to by the Gospel. All the world, says the great apostle of the Gentiles, is become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19. That the whole human race are obnoxious to the divine resentments, that they have rendered themselves liable to the executions of his just vengeance, is too evident to need any elaborate proof: That we have lost that beautiful and glittering robe of innocence, which our first father wore, and where-with he was so richly adorned; that the crown of universal purity, and unblemished rectitude, is fallen from our heads, seems so plain a fact, that surely few or none will venture to contradict it. Now since we have destroyed ourselves, *i. e.* exposed ourselves to all the thunders of strict and rigorous justice, so that we deserve to be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God; seeing this is our deplorable case by nature, and practice, how welcome should the tidings of peace and pardon be, through the atonement and satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ? And this is indeed one eminent part of the glorious gospel, the capital, the leading, blessing of it. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more, Heb. viii. 12." Hereby way is made for the communication of farther benefits, for the bestowment of all those advantages, both of a temporal and spiritual kind, that we are favoured to enjoy. The guilt of our transgressions, our obnoxiousness to

suffer punishment, pursuant to the sanction of the divine law, is such an obstacle to the communication of farther favours, that unless it be removed, we must be miserable for ever. But for the encouragement of every returning prodigal, of every penitent sinner, who is humbly desirous to receive the atonement, and thankfully to accept the proffered remission, we are expressly informed in that admirable third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, that the divine Father hath set forth, or pre-ordained his Son, our dear and only mediator, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. i. e. that he might still shine in all the splendors of his untainted justice, and in all the more inviting glories of his mercy. To be delivered from the curse of a violated law, to obtain peace with God, being justified by Faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that by a scheme every way consistent with all the divine attributes; This, this is a most engaging consideration, this is a most valuable and important branch of salvation.

2. In salvation there is moreover included the healing our natures, the purifying of our affections, and conversation, by the influences of God's Holy Spirit, or a restoration of our faculties

culties to their primitive rectitude. By our dreadful apostacy from our great and adorable maker, preserver and bountiful benefactor, we are not only become guilty, but polluted and awfully depraved; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Job xiv. 4. And in another place, what is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that is born of a woman that he should be righteous? How else comes it to pass, that we should be so prone to imitate vicious rather than good examples, had we not derived a polluted nature from Adam, the head of the apostacy? Let us attend with the deepest seriousness to the scripture account of this shocking affair; God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions, Eccles. vii. 29. The imagination of the heart of man is evil, only evil, and that continually; and again, that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; Gen. vi. 5. compared with chap. viii. 21. It is very observable, that this is affirmed of the race of mankind, not only before but after the flood. That the carnal mind, or whatever else may be denoted by the phrase [*φρονημα της σαρκος*] is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; from whence the apostle justly, and with striking emphasis, infers, so then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God, i. e. those who are in a state of thorough alienation, depravity and pollution. Now the salvation of the gospel not only

only supposes a necessity, but exhibits a divine ability, and readiness to illuminate our dark understandings; dark and blind indeed, however acute and eagle-eyed as to the things of nature and art, with respect to the suitableness and importance of heavenly and supernatural objects. Therefore we read of being renewed in the very spirit of our minds, Eph. iv. 23. of a necessity of a change of heart, or that a celestial turn be given to our wills and affections; our Saviour solemnly assuring us, that unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, John iii. 3. and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the spirit is spirit, or that a spiritual and divine principle is produced by the blessed Spirit's sanctifying operations. It is true we are not renewed after the image of God so much instantaneously as gradually. A principle of spiritual and divine life is, I apprehend, implanted at once, according to that sacred declaration, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes, &c." But then there is a working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, a giving diligence to make our calling and election sure, in subordination to, or in concurrence with, a divine co-operation, as in the words immediately following those just now cited, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Hence

Hence we elsewhere read of the new man, which after God is created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, which we are exhorted to put on ; or, as it is elsewhere expressed by the apostle Peter, that ye add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, &c. without which holiness no man can, or shall see the Lord, to his everlasting consolation and joy. Hence,

3. Deliverance from the malignant tendency of afflictions ; but on the contrary, their being made to co-operate for our advantage, disarming the most formidable evils of their sting, and death itself, to nature the king of terrors, or salvation in and out of trouble. Thus God says, I will be with him in trouble, Psal. xci. 5. To be kept from murmuring under trying dispensations of providence, to be enabled to justify God under such events, acknowledging that he corrects far less than our iniquities have deserved, to be able to say with David, under a severe calamity, I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it ; to be helped to plead the promises of the well-ordered covenant, those good and comfortable words, on which he may have already caused us to hope, and as the result hereof, to find his love shed abroad in our hearts ; or that in the multitude of our troubled thoughts within us, his consolations delight our souls ; to have our souls satisfied as with marrow and fatness, in the prospects of a future world,
on

on account of those glorious ravishing scenes that lie open before us, being well assured that these light afflictions, which are comparatively but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Thus to glorify him, as the prophet phrases it, in the midst of the fires, I say, thus not only to be cheerful and submissive under afflictions, not only to be able to say with holy Job, the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord, but even to glory in tribulation; this is a height that mere unassisted reason, that all the philosophers of the heathen world could never reach. The Stoics indeed talked of an apathy, or rather a stupidity; their pretended indifference either to pleasure or pain was all grimace*; whereas the noble and wise design of the christian system is not to divest human nature of the passions, but to correct and bring them into subjection, to grace and reason. We are not machines, we have sensations, we feel calamities not as men, but as christians, we dread either to despise the chastening of the Lord on the one hand, or on the other to faint when rebuked of him, Heb.

* The story of Possidonius, who was visited by Pompey when he was extremely afflicted with the gout, but would not own it to be an Evil, may serve very well to illustrate the point before us; he crying out, *Nihil agis dolor, quamvis sis molestus, nunquam te esse confitebor Malum!* See Collier's essay on pain.

xii. 5. And then as our merciful God saves in trouble, not only prevents us from repining, by the secret operations of his grace, but assists us also to bear up sometimes under the most shocking pressures, to flourish like the palm-tree, which, as is generally reported, the more weights are laid on it the more it thrives, Psal. xcii. 12. As I say, he is pleased to assist us to bear up with a sacred fortitude, and illustrious magnanimity of soul, superior to what all the philosophers of antiquity were capable of arriving at, though many of their precepts and doctrines were admirable. So our gracious and Almighty Father, who will not always chide, neither will keep anger for ever, lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he has made; I say, he will therefore finally deliver good men, all his faithful children and obedient servants, sooner or later, out of their troubles. Sometimes in this life, as the apostle James excellently observes, ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, &c. James v. 11. You may at your leisure read the whole pathetic and instructive narrative, concerning this most eminent servant of God, with fresh sacred wonder and pleasure.

But though a period should not be put to any particular affliction in the present imperfect state, yet it shall most certainly be well with the righteous, in the regions of unclouded lustre,
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of spotless purity, and complete felicity. As there their happiness must be without alloy, so their trials will of course be all over; those trials of various sorts, which constituted so great a part of their militant condition, will be quite ended. Here we fight, but there we are crown'd. Which naturally leads us to the

4th, and last thing under our first general head, viz. Our being raised and exalted to all the amiable realities, and immense felicities of a better and brighter world, and that both in soul and body. This is stiled salvation by way of eminence, 1 Peter i. 9. receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls; as it contains in it not only total and absolute deliverance from the very in-being of sin, an eradication of every vain thought, and the absence of every irregular inclination and inordinate desire; but as it moreover infers the complete felicity of man in both his constituent parts, with reference where-to all previous salvations, every antecedent appearance of kind providence and grace were intended. It is a good maxim of divines, that grace and holiness, virtue and real goodness, are no other than glory in the bud; that there is no specific, only a gradual difference between them, that all we enjoy here of a religious and heavenly nature, is but like the first-fruits, compared with the full harvest of immortal, unpolluted joys; that it is but like a drop to the ocean of eternal sweetness, and ineffable delights, or like a single

single beam of the sun compared with that luminary in all its meridian brightness. We are here like so many embryos imprisoned in darkness, but then we shall burst the shell, and stand confessed amidst the surrounding splendors of that triumphant world, having arrived at the stature and beauty of angels. We read of the spirits of just men made perfect, as well as of an innumerable company of glittering angels, Heb. xii. 23. made perfect in knowledge, holiness and joy: Here the best of us, the most improved, see but in part, and prophecy but in part; the brightest divines, the most accomplished philosophers, talk like children, and especially concerning the invisible state. We shall be surprized with the queen of Sheba, acknowledging with great and rapturous astonishment, that not half, not half, did I say, not a ten thousandth part of that glory had, or could have been told us, while sojourning in these tents of separation, while conversant among these earthy, and inferior scenes, whilst groveling in dust and misery, on the footstool, attended with numerous, unallowed imperfections, clad with infirmities of various kinds. The great apostle Paul tells us, that when caught up into paradise, he heard things which it was not lawful, or possible, for man in this mortal state to utter. Had we, my friends, the tongues of men and angels, still we could not find words rich and strong enough to convey those sublime and magnificent ideas, that

the glory we are speaking of must necessarily excite, especially in the enlarged faculties, in the capacious minds of saints and seraphim. How do these glorious spirits, those bright and spotless intelligences, glow continually with the most celestial ardors ! Are they not like so many pure flames, mounting higher and higher still, in the knowledge, love, admiration, and adoration of their God and King ? And how do his redeemed people in particular, resound the loftiest hallelujahs, to the name of their incomparable Redeemer, to Christ the captain of their salvation, through whose almighty love they have been made more than conquerors ? How does the melody pour in from all quarters of those shining realms, To him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God, and his Father, to him be glory, and dominion, now and for ever, amen. Rev. i. 6. Should one of those happy spirits, this instant, be dispatch'd from the blazing portals of that city of God above ; were he to make his appearance in this very assembly, would he not express himself to this effect. I cannot describe those millions of glories that shine and reign in every part of that upper world ; all the powers of language are too feeble and too faint to paint out the matchless beauties of that eternal heaven ; all the flowers of your earthly oratory are too languid and mean. What sights have I lately beheld ?

What

What sounds have I been favoured to hear? Oh that you saw! oh that you heard the same! I hasten back with joy, and long till you, my younger brethren, shall be admitted thither, where you will be most joyfully congratulated by multitudes of that church triumphant, who like you were once fighting in the valley with Amalek, before they got to that lovely Canaan, were attended like you with a body of death, with doubts and fears, and distresses of various kinds. What a bright abridgment of heaven, what a sweet epitome of that upper state, were the disciples favoured with, in that vision of their master's glory on the holy mount, which induced them to say, Lord, it is good for us to be here. Consult the whole sacred narrative. What an account have we also of the vision of that beloved apostle and evangelist St. John, Rev. i. from verse 13 to 17.

Now such representations as these exhibit some faint gleams, some incompleat glimpses, if I may so phrase it, of that super-excellent glory, like the lights and shades in a picture, which are far from coming up to the inimitable original; and besides all this, at the great rising day, these vile bodies shall be raised, and re-united to the spirits of the just, who are described as waiting for the adoption, i. e. the full declaration and manifestation of their adoption, even the redemption of their bodies, Rom. viii. 23. Thus the same apostle, in the passage just now hinted at,

at, acquaints us, that with regard to himself, and all real christians, their conversation was in heaven, from whence says he, we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change this vile body [*το σωμα της ταπεινωσης*] this body of our humiliation, which tends to humble us under so many marks of meanness and infirmity, and shall fashion it like to his glorious body. So likewise the apostle John, cries out as in an extasy, as one in a great surprize, and I believe his surprize has not yet ceased; behold what manner of love the father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God, 1 John iii. 1. And again, ver. 2. beloved now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but this we know, and that's abundantly sufficient for us, in the present state, that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. This clod shall be turned into a star, this mortal shall put on immortality. What a spiritual body will be, we are at a very great loss to know, only this we are sure of, that then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, that the body shall be no clog, no hindrance, to the most vigorous exercises of its dear partner and inhabitant; we shall be sprightly as sun-beams: For speaking of those, who shall be found alive at Christ's second appearing, who, as he elsewhere tells us, shall undergo a remarkable change; then we, says St. Paul, who are alive and remain,

main, shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so, which is a noble summary of all that happiness we humbly hope to possess both in soul and body, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Suffer me, before I address myself to the consideration of the second general head, to repeat some lines composed by a divine of the last century in Scotland, a very little before he entered into his master's joy. They contain such strong triumphs of faith, as may well atone for some small defects either of language or poetry. This excellent man of God in the near views of his dissolution, thus addresses death, his last enemy, like a christian hero, as one who knew his Saviour had conquered this grim monster for him, as well as for the meanest of his followers, and had brought life and immortality to light thro' the gospel.

Come stingless death waft o'er : lo here's my pass,
In blood character'd, by his hand who was,
And is, and shall be. Jordan cut thy streams,
Make channels dry, I bear my father's name
Stamp'd on my brow. I'm ravish'd with my crown,
It shines so bright, down with all glory down
That earth can give. I see the pearly port,
The glorious place where blessed souls resort,
The tree of life, floods gushing from the throne,
Call me to joys, Be gone short woes be gone.

I liv'd to die, but now I die to live,
 I do enjoy more than I did believe;
 The promise me into possession sends,
 Hope in fruition, faith in vision ends.

I now proceed to the

II. General head, and that is to shew how the unmerited mercy and grace of God shine and are displayed in this salvation, in that great and glorious salvation we are made partakers of by the gospel, which is therefore stiled the gospel of the grace of God, and the gospel of salvation. The term grace is used in various acceptations in scripture; e. g. it very frequently denotes divine principles and habits. Thus the sacred writer tells us, that of the great Redeemer's fulness have we all received, and grace for grace. So elsewhere the apostle writes to the Corinthians, that as ye abound in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. At other times it denotes divine influence exerted for our advantage; thus it is said, by the grace of God, I am what I am. It elsewhere signifies that love and mercy which resides in the heart of God with reference to miserable and unworthy offender. In all these senses, especially the last, we are saved by divine grace.

1. We are justified, pardoned and intitled to eternal life, by the free mercy and grace of God, displayed in and through a mediator.

Thus

Thus the great doctor of the Gentiles affirms, Rom iii. 24. that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; and in another place, that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life. Tit. iii. 7. But then the question is naturally put, how can pardon of sin and eternal life be the free gift of God, the result of his unmerited mercy and compassion, when it cost the blessed Jesus his blood to purchase these inestimable benefits? To this the answer is easy. It is true it cost our Redeemer very dear, but then it is free and gratuitous with regard to us. Hence eternal life is represented as the [χάρισμα] the free gift of God, but then the inspired writer immediately adds, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We did not find the ransom but God, in whom says the apostle, we have redemption, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his, i. e. of God the Father's grace. We see then there is a happy connection and harmony, no inconsistency at all between our being pardoned, and rewarded in consequence of Christ's sufferings and atonement, and the brightest displays of divine mercy and compassion. God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son, and herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And again, God herein com-

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mendeth

mendeth his love towards us, or sets it off with the highest, and most engaging lustre, like a diamond, if it be lawful to compare such small trifles as diamonds, and all earthly treasures, with the durable and infinite riches of divine love and grace; like a diamond, I say, set to advantage, God herein commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. v. 8. And O how does his compassion shine in forgiving our ten thousand talents, our numerous faults and offences, for the sake of the blessed Jesus. As it is said Eph. iv. 32. Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Nay, grace is said to be given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. As God the Father then purposed to bestow mercy, to shew favour to numberless numbers of Adam's guilty posterity, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, &c. Eph. i. 4. Thus we are elsewhere told, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, and though he was the man his fellow, the son of his delights, yet when he undertook to suffer, and satisfy for the iniquities of his people, the divine Father, who does not afflict willingly, nor grieve even any of the children of men, is represented as saying, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, Zech. xiii. 7. Thus the great apostle observes, he that spared not
his

his own son, but delivered him up, i. e. to die an ignominious, a painful, nay, an accursed death, Rom. viii. 32. Adorable compassion! Amazing, endearing, and affecting mysteries of love and sweetness. How engaging the consideration, that he should sheath the glittering sword of his avenging justice, in the bowels of his only begotten son; that such law-condemned, self-condemned, guilty, polluted rebels as we were, might live before him. That the offended himself should die, that offenders might go free, for the person that was God, as well as man, Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature, God manifested in the flesh, purchased the church with his own blood, Acts xx. 20. That word who was in the beginning with God, and was himself God, not only condescended to tabernacle among us for a season, not only assumed our nature, with all its sinless infirmities, not only had a true human body, and a true human soul, but in that nature offered himself a sacrifice highly acceptable to God the father; for, forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise, took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, &c. Heb. ii. 14. And all this pursuant to the eternal covenant of redemption and grace between the Father and him, who sanctified, or set him apart to the great work and office of Mediator, and sent him into our world, that he

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might

might die and suffer to save the very chief of sinners, who return and live, who sincerely repent and believe. In this glorious scheme of our recovery, which at once astonishes and saves us, mercy and truth, to allude to that of the Psalmist, lxxxv. 10. have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; so that as the result of the execution of this eternal plan, the blessed God who keepeth mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, is not only merciful, but faithful and just, when he forgiveth our sins, and cleanseth from all unrighteousness those that confess their sins, and desire to forsake and depart from them. What is faith, says the great and worthy Dr. Owen, but the flight of a penitent sinner to Christ, according to that of the sacred writer to the Hebrews, chap. vi. 17. wherein God willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, viz. his word, and his oath, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us. And with what a striking emphasis does he put the question? For if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified unto the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself to God without spot, purge your consciences from
dead

dead works, that ye may serve the living God? chap. ix. 14. This leads us,

2dly, To consider how brightly the grace of God shines in restoring his image, which we had lost by our apostacy; with what endearing lustre his free mercy is magnified, and displayed, in such a dispensation. Blessed, cries the apostle Peter, with hands, and eyes, and heart all elevated at once, blessed be the God, and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, &c. 1 Pet. i. 3. and who hath saved, and called us, says the apostle of the Gentiles, with an holy calling; and elsewhere, for we ourselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another: but after that the loving kindness of God our Saviour toward man appeared! Admirable philanthropy! sovereign distinguishing mercy to fallen man rather than to apostate angels! not by works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, or [πλεσιως] richly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

If it be considered, that the human faculties are sadly out of order, till a renovating change
passes

passes upon them, that sense and appetite have the entire ascendant, that we are only doing that which seems right in our own eyes, and not that which is really for our advantage, and for God's glory. That as the consequence of this we are unhappy, and uncomfortable, in the fulness of our sufficiency, being in straits, as it is beautifully expressed, Job xx. 22. that we are fulfilling the irregular desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath, who have demerited all that vengeance which is due to sin, even as others, Eph. ii. 3. I say when we consider these things, how affecting does that blessed alteration appear, which divine grace makes on the renewed soul, when the bent and bias of it is turned towards God, and the remembrance of his name; when instead of pursuing after the unsatisfying objects of time, as our portion and chief good, we can say with the Psalmist, whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides, or in comparison of thee; Psalm lxxiii. 25. When we know what it is in some measure to delight ourselves in the Lord, that he may give us the regular desires of our hearts, Psalm xxxvii. 4. When instead of losing our God, our father, our best, our heavenly friend, in a croud of his mercies, we are enabled, especially at some seasons, to make creatures, ordinances, and providences, as so many steps of ascension to him; when we are the more attached

tached to him, as our supreme happiness, thro' Jesus Christ, the more his bounties flow in upon us. When supposing we have riches and honours in abundance, our hearts are lifted up, as was said of good king Jehosaphat, not with pride, but in the ways of the Lord, 2 Chron. xx. 25. &c. Or when on the other hand we are reduced to the lowest ebb of poverty and distress, and are inabled to live more immediately on the fountain, and to expect, in the use of all appointed means, those supplies of every kind that we stand in need of, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as knowing that all other things shall be added to us : thus cheerfully and solidly arguing, with the great apostle, he that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things, i. e. all things for our present and future well being, Rom. viii. 32. How gloriously, how ravishingly is the power of divine grace displayed in such a conduct ! Again, when we reflect that he hath called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light, that he has made us partakers of a divine nature, thro' the great and precious promises of the gospel, that he has pluckt us as brands out of the burning, to allude to that in Zech. iii. 2. that he has reduced us from our wandrings, has brought us into the right way, into the paths of truth and peace, as our great and good shepherd, how can the convert, especially at some seasons, refrain

frain tears of joy. How does the Plalmist celebrate his happiness, and extol the divine mercy, in the 23d Psalm, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, he feedeth me in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters, he restoreth my soul. And in another place; the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage: And tho' after conversion when this blessed change has passed upon us, we too often backslide, and wander from him, still we are enabled frequently to recollect ourselves, saying with the same sweet singer of Israel, return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee, Psalm cxvi. 7. In fine, to be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, to be made new creatures, to have new desires, new delights, new sorrows, and new joys, is not only honourable, but it is pleasant and advantageous, or extremely conducive to our happiness both here and hereafter. It is honourable, for as sin is our deformity, so holiness is our beauty; it is advantageous, for it renders us useful and profitable to all around us, tends to make us common blessings in our day and generation, and then it is pleasant, it is extremely conducive to our happiness. Christ's yoke even here is easy, the yoke of his precepts, and of his afflictive providences, and his burden is light. Thus the apostle, and thus myriads besides him have found it; most gladly therefore, says he, will I glory in my infirmities, that

that the power of Christ may rest upon me, 2 Cor. xii. 9. what he means by infirmities is explained at the 10th verse, therefore I take pleasure in necessities, in afflictions, in persecutions and distresses, for when I am weak then am I strong. And then unless love to God, through a mediator, be predominant, unless upon mature deliberation we can count all things but loss for, or, in comparison of, the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, unless the unfeigned language of our hearts be A Christ, rather than ten thousand worlds; Oh! may he be made of God, to me in particular, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: without this, I say, as there can be no walking with God here, so there can be no enjoyment of him hereafter. Now since regeneration thus fits us for usefulness, renders us truly serviceable in the present world, from genuine, evangelical, and truly noble motives, to right and excellent ends: Since it conduces so to our well-being, to make us easy and comfortable, holy and heavenly, as far as this imperfect state will admit, and seeing, lastly, it renders us meet for the enjoyments and employments, for the business and the blessedness of a better world, Oh! how engagingly does the grace and mercy of our God shine in this great transaction. Let not any be discouraged because they cannot remember the time when this happy change was wrought; some are sanctified as it were from the womb,

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have had serious impressions of God and eternity on their minds from their earliest childhood. Others are rather gently allured and drawn to Christ by the still small voice of the gospel, than alarmed and driven by the thunders of the law. An omnipotent sweetness instantly melts the hearts of some, whilst in others the work is more gradual. Nevertheless sooner or later, all are convinced of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; of the hideous deformity of vice in every shape, and especially of that mother of abominations, the sin of unbelief: Of righteousness, or the necessity, excellence and glory, of the Redeemer's most perfect righteousness, and atonement, and of judgment, by which I understand the necessity and importance of evangelical holiness, and new obedience. The most eminent conversions of the former sort recorded in scripture, are those of Zaccheus and Lydia; and of the latter sort, the apostle Paul.

I come now to the more immediate occasion of this discourse, the death of a person, who I think, with many others, was an extraordinary instance of the power and grace of God. The words of the late excellent, pious and ingenious Dr. Doddridge, relating to him, are well worth attending to. The paragraph is to be met with in his life of Col. Gardiner, p. 157. "I had then
 " with me, says the worthy Doctor, one Thomas Porter, a poor, but very honest and religious man, (now living at Hatfield-Broad-
 " oak

“ oak in Essex, who is quite unacquainted with
 “ letters, so as not to be able to distinguish one
 “ from another; yet is master of the contents
 “ of the Bible, in so extraordinary a degree,
 “ that he has not only fixed an immense num-
 “ ber of texts in his memory, but merely by
 “ hearing them quoted in sermons, has regi-
 “ stered there the chapter and verse, in which
 “ these passages are to be found: This is attend-
 “ ed with a marvellous facility in directing those
 “ that can read to turn to them, and a most un-
 “ accountable talent of fixing on such as suit
 “ almost every imaginable variety of circum-
 “ stances, in common life. There are two
 “ considerations in his case, which make it the
 “ more wonderful; the one, that he is a per-
 “ son of a very low genius, having besides a
 “ stammering, which makes his speech almost
 “ unintelligible to strangers, so wild and awk-
 “ ward a manner of behaviour, that he is fre-
 “ quently taken for an idiot, and seems in ma-
 “ ny things to be indeed so: The other, that
 “ he grew up to manhood in a very licentious
 “ course of living, an entire ignorance of divine
 “ things, so that all these exact impressions on his
 “ memory, have been made in his riper years. I
 “ thought it would not be disagreeable to the
 “ Colonel, to introduce to him this odd phæ-
 “ nomenon, which many hundreds of people
 “ have had a curiosity to examine. And among
 “ all the strange things I have seen in him, I

“ never remember any which equalled what
 “ passed on this occasion. On hearing the Co-
 “ lonel’s profession, and receiving some hints of
 “ his religious character, he ran through a vast
 “ variety of scriptures, beginning at the Penta-
 “ teuch, and going on to the Revelations, rela-
 “ ting either to the dependance to be fixed on
 “ God for the success of military preparations,
 “ or to the instances and promises occurring
 “ there, of his care of good men in the most
 “ imminent dangers, or to the encouragement
 “ to despise perils and death, while engaged in
 “ a good cause, and supported by the views of a
 “ happy immortality. I believe he quoted more
 “ than twenty of these passages; and I must
 “ freely own, that I know not who could have
 “ chose them with greater propriety. If my
 “ memory do not deceive me, the last of his
 “ catalogue was that from which I afterwards
 “ preached, on the lamented occasion of this
 “ great man’s fall. Be thou faithful unto death,
 “ and I will give thee a crown of life, Rev. ii.
 “ 10. We were all astonished at so remarkable
 “ a fact, and I question not but that many of
 “ my readers will think the memory of it worthy
 “ of being thus preserved. To which valuable
 “ and remarkable particulars, may I be permitted
 “ to add, that several years before the doctor knew
 “ him, I was acquainted with his manner of life,
 “ which to me appeared very inoffensive and be-
 “ coming his profession. He has often told me
 and

and many others the means of his conversion, or of that serious turn of mind, he was so eminent for, and that was a funeral sermon preach'd by a minister in the country, from that striking passage, What is your life? is it not as a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away, James iv. 14. Before this it was notoriously known, he was as mischievous as he was ignorant; ignorant and stupid to a very uncommon degree; nay, when I was first acquainted with him, which is now about sixteen years ago, he discovered no sort of sagacity, but a great deal of childish folly in every thing, almost, that he said or did, except as to that amazing talent above-mentioned. I shall only here undertake to mention plain facts, without pretending to account for them, leaving others to determine as to the causes, of such uncommon circumstances that attended him. e. g. A poor woman in the town of Hatfield, being seized with a distemper that prevented her from taking any sustenance, she made signs that this person should give a suitable text to be insisted on at her funeral; he immediately bid the people present turn to that passage, Lament. iv. 9. They that be slain with the sword, are better than they that be slain with hunger, for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. A text very seldom, if ever quoted in publick, and now very remarkably adapted to the case of this afflicted woman. Another

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other remarkable thing, and which was taken notice of by several as well as myself, was that the intellects of this poor man surprizingly brightened up, by degrees, to the very last year of his life. How it was with him in the article of death, I know not, only have been informed that it was pretty sudden. I shall say no more relating to this extraordinary person, than that he was the admiration of not only the vulgar, but of numerous judicious persons of every party and denomination, and of all ranks; and I have often thought of the goodness of providence in general, that when any of our species are deficient in any one of the precious senses, or remarkably so in their intellectual endowments, it is very often made up some other way. Let us now close the whole with some practical improvement.

1st. Then let us enquire whether we have ground to conclude that we are already saved and shall be farther saved, by that adorable grace you have been hearing of. Conscious of our guilt and danger, and of our desert of everlasting punishment, have we fervently pleaded the righteousness of Christ, for our acceptance with God; that righteousness, which, as the apostle says, is unto, and upon all them that believe, without difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Have we sincerely and ardently implored, and is it our daily request, that being justified by the dear Redeemer's

deemer's blood, we may be saved from wrath
 through him? And is it our earnest concern and
 serious endeavour that we may be like Christ?
 Are we writing after the bright copy he has set
 us, though we make many a blot, are guilty of
 numerous, unallowed mistakes? Is it our desire
 that God in all things may be glorified in us
 and by us, and that we may adorn the doctrine
 of our dearest Saviour? That the grace of God
 which bringeth salvation may effectually teach
 us to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and
 to live soberly, righteously, and piously, in the
 present world? that being bought with a price,
 we may glorify God in our bodies, and in our
 spirits, which are his? And is God the centre
 of our rest and blessedness, and do we desire to
 honour him in our day and generation in those
 respective stations, and relations, wherein his
 providence may have placed us, as a people, he
 has formed for himself, in order to shew forth
 his praise; a people zealous of good works, em-
 ploying their zeal with reference to vital practi-
 cal religion, more than to support the cause of
 any party whatsoever. Now if you can set your
 seal to what has been delivered, if this is your
 happy experience in the main, and if you prize
 the image of God wherever you see it, though
 in persons of different denominations among
 christians, for by this we know we are passed
 from death to life, because we love the bre-
 thren; Is this your happy case, and do you de-
 fire

fire still more and more to abound in all heavenly tempers and dispositions, than you have abundant ground to hope that when this earthly house of your tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; 2 Cor. v. 1. that you shall never come into condemnation, as the great Saviour of sinners has assured all such happy persons. Such as you need not fear death, let it come ever so soon, ever so suddenly,

Once more and I have done. How should the candidates of an immortal crown the heirs of this salvation, bless God at all times. Should not his lofty praise be continually in their mouths! Should they not in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning them. He has done more for you than for thousands of the rich and noble of this world, infinitely more than if he had put golden sceptres into your hands, and glittering earthly diadems on your heads. How should you admire and adore the hand, that has plucked your feet as out of the miry clay, when you thought yourselves absolutely undone; so despairing and disconsolate were your minds; has he not set your feet on Christ the rock of eternal ages, and established your goings? So that now the Lord Jesus Christ, in his person, and offices, is your hope, your hope in point of pardon, and acceptance with God, your hope in point of strength, to bring forth fruit to the divine
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honour, and to crown all, your hope of immortal glory. How should you then call upon your souls, and all that is within you to bless his holy name, who forgiveth all your iniquities, who healeth all your diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindneses and tender mercies. Should you not shout grace, grace, from the foundation to the top-stone of your salvation: This will be your everlasting, delightful employment, when you shall be admitted to join the holy, happy, shining, myriads above, in their work, and worship, making all heaven eccho with the thunder of your praises, singing, acclaiming, Worthy, worthy, is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive riches, and honour, and power, and blessing. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake; and again, Salvation to our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Permit me to conclude with those favourite lines of our sublime and divine poet *.

The spacious earth and spreading flood,
Proclaim the wise and pow'rful God,
And thy rich glories, from afar,
Sparkle in ev'ry rolling star.

But in his looks a glory stands,
The noblest labour of thine hands,

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The

* Dr. Watts.

The pleasing lustre of his eyes,
Outshines the wonders of the skies.

Grace! 'tis a sweet, a charming theme,
My thoughts rejoice at Jesus' name;
Ye angels dwell upon the sound,
Ye Heav'ns reflect it to the ground.

Oh may I reach at last the place,
Where he unveils his lovely face!
Where all his beauties you behold,
And sing his name to harps of gold.



F I N I S.

Supplement to p. 5. l. 6.

I cannot help observing as a collateral argument, that the wisest and greatest of the heathen world, acknowledged that our nature was, at least in some degree, vitiated. Thus Horace Serm. lib. 1. 3.

Nam vitiis nemo fine nascitur, optimus ille,
Qui minimis urgetur. —

And elsewhere in his odes,

Ætas parentum peior avis tulit
Nos nequiores, mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosorem.

Hence also that celebrated saying,

Κακὲ κοραίος, κακὸν γον.

To the narrative given p. 29. add, that I never saw the poor man so disconcerted and angry, as once when some idle school-boys had been teizing and making a jest of him. He complained to their master, in whose house he then was, and who had treated him with great kindness; saying, I must give them a text. I remember it was that passage in the Proverbs; Fools make a
mock

mock of sin, but among the righteous there is favour; when instantly recollecting and chiding his own warmth, he cried out with a mixture of grief and displeasure in his countenance, but I must give myself a text too, namely in the Ephesians, Let all anger and wrath and bitterness be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, &c.

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